

**United States Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management**

Environmental Assessment

DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2015-0024-DNA

March 2015

Dry Creek Soil Erosion Mitigation

*Location: Dry Creek Travel Management Area
Montrose and Delta County*

**U.S. Department of the Interior
Bureau of Land Management
Uncompahgre Field Office
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Determination of NEPA Adequacy (DNA)

NUMBER: DOI-BLM-CO-S050-2015-0024-DNA

PROPOSED ACTION TITLE: Dry Creek Soil Erosion Mitigation

LOCATION/LEGAL DESCRIPTION: This project is located within T. 47 N., R. 9 W, 10 W, and 11W.; T. 48 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 49 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 50 N., R. 10 W., 11 W., 11 W., and 12 W.; T. 51 N., R. 11 W. and 12 W.

APPLICANT: BLM Uncompahgre Field Office

BACKGROUND: The BLM completed the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan (TMP) (EA# CO-150-2008-33) in 2009. The proposed project would implement priority Dry Creek Travel Management Plan (TMP) objectives and management decisions for meeting Land Health Standards, minimizing areas that meet standards with problems, improving resource protection, and maintaining quality travel opportunities along with adequate and appropriate public access.

The BLM also completed the Spring Creek/Dry Creek Vegetation Management EA (CO-150-2003-0042 EA) for Mechanical and Prescribed Fire Vegetation Treatments in 2003. The proposed project would use very limited mechanical removal of pinyon and juniper trees to stabilize soil erosion while meeting the vegetation mosaic objectives developed in the EA.

A. Description of the Proposed Action and any applicable mitigation measures

The proposed action is to implement soil mitigation measures as identified in the travel management planning process. There were 132 route segments identified as needing mitigation for erosion problems.

The travel plan identified the following design features:

BLM re-routes or re-locations needed for erosion or other mitigation would be limited to a corridor 25 feet wide on either side of the centerline of all designated routes. This corridor is assumed as a potential area for future BLM re-routes only and in the foreseeable future this corridor would be seldom used.

Restoring natural drainage patterns, surface topography, and vegetation would be considered and implemented as needed during rehabilitation of routes to be relocated or closed to travel.

On selected route segments, drainage problems will be mitigated by diverting flow from incised channels on the road surface or adjacent to it. Water bars, small rock diverters and tree debris will be used to slow and divert water from continuing to erode soils. Existing dead trees will be used to divert flows as well as nearby live young trees less than 10' tall. Selective tree removal will be done to complement the desired mosaic objectives outlined in the Spring Creek/Dry Creek Vegetation Management EA. Cut trees will be placed in severe erosion sites to help slow water and catch sediment.

Surveys for the Colorado Hookless cactus will be done in the down gradient areas of all planned erosion control features along The Canal D12 and Canal Allotment (3576) routes. Flow paths will be relocated or manipulated on any feature that could result in increased runoff and sediment delivery to Colorado Hookless cactus plants adjacent to the routes.

Cactus plants will be surveyed for, and marked that occur between erosion control features and material collection sites so that workers avoid trampling individual Colorado Hookless cactus.

B. Land Use Plan (LUP) Conformance

LUP Name: Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment for the Uncompahgre Field Office Dry Creek Travel Management Plan

Date Approved: December 1, 2009

The proposed action is in conformance with the applicable LUP because it is specifically provided for in the following LUP decisions:

Decision Language:

(Page 19): "Management Objectives...Closures and rehabilitation of some routes would also be used to meet land health standards along with establishing and following all the best management practices."

C. Identify applicable National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) documents and other related documents that cover the proposed action.

Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment (CO-150-2008-33 EA) for the Uncompahgre Field Office Dry Creek Travel Management Plan, approved December 1, 2009.

Spring Creek/Dry Creek Vegetation Management (CO-150-2003-0042 EA) for Mechanical and Prescribed Fire Vegetation Treatments within two watersheds to improve ecological health, improve the vegetative mosaic, improve wildlife habitat, and to reduce hazardous wildfire fuels. Approved 10/02/2003.

D. NEPA Adequacy Criteria

1. Is the new proposed action a feature of, or essentially similar to, an alternative analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? Is the project within the same analysis area, or if the project location is different, are the geographic and resource conditions sufficiently similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s)? If there are differences, can you explain why they are not substantial?

Yes. The proposed action is a feature of the actions analyzed in the Resource Management Plan Amendment/Environmental Assessment for the Uncompahgre Field Office Dry Creek Travel Management Plan EA# CO-150-2008-33. The proposed action project is specifically called for in the EA. The proposed project is within the same analysis area as the RMP Amendment and EA.

The Spring Creek/Dry Creek EA specifically analyzed mechanical removal of vegetation to achieve desired mosaic conditions. In low elevation pinyon/juniper sagebrush habitat, 350 acres were identified in the Dry Creek area covering the same area where 78 miles of routes were identified as needing soil erosion mitigation. Selective tree removal would be appropriate to achieve both vegetation mosaic objectives as well as soil erosion mitigation.

A small portion of the routes are located north of the area analyzed in the Spring Creek/Dry Creek EA, but the area consists of the same low elevation pinyon/juniper sagebrush habitat. There would be little difference in the type of mosaic objectives desired. In addition, since the size of trees will be limited, and the scale of tree removal will be limited to several trees per drainage, impacts would be far less than those analyzed in the EA.

2. Is the range of alternatives analyzed in the existing NEPA document(s) appropriate with respect to the new proposed action, given current environmental concerns, interests, and resource values?

Yes. The range of alternatives analyzed in the Resource Management Plan Dry Creek Travel Management Plan EA is appropriate. The EA analyzed the No Action alternative and three action alternatives, each with differing route mileages, uses and designations. The alternative selected is still appropriate because there are no additional environmental concerns, interests or resource values which would necessitate creation of further alternatives.

3. Is the existing analysis valid in light of any new information or circumstances (such as, rangeland health standard assessment, recent endangered species listings, updated lists of

BLM-sensitive species)? Can you reasonably conclude that new information and new circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the new proposed action?

Yes. The existing analysis is valid for this proposed action. This project proposes to implement Dry Creek Travel Management Plan objectives and land use plan decisions. The land health assessment has not changed, special status species have not been added, and other conditions on the ground have not changed. We can reasonably conclude that new information and circumstances would not substantially change the analysis of the proposed action.

4. Are the direct, indirect, and cumulative effects that would result from implementation of the new proposed action similar (both quantitatively and qualitatively) to those analyzed in the existing NEPA document?

Yes. The direct, indirect and cumulative effects from implementing the new proposed action would be similar to those analyzed in the existing NEPA documents. The effects are similar in both scope (amount of area affected) and nature (type of projects) to those already analyzed.

5. Are the public involvement and interagency review associated with existing NEPA document(s) adequate for the current proposed action?

Yes. Interagency review, scoping and multiple public comment periods were conducted during the Dry Creek Travel Management Plan EA. None of the comments or findings are in conflict with this proposed action.

E. Persons/Agencies /BLM Staff Consulted

<u>Name</u>	<u>Title</u>	<u>Resource/Agency Represented</u>
Glade Hadden		Cultural Resources, Paleontology, Native American Religious Concerns
Ken Holsinger		Threatened, Endangered, and Sensitive Species, Wildlife, Migratory Birds
Julie Jackson		Access and Transportation, Recreation
Jedd Sondergard		Soils, surface water, and NEPA compliance

REMARKS:

Cultural Resources: The proposed soil erosion mitigation actions are all situated entirely within existing roads and travel routes evaluated with the Dry Creek travel management planning effort. No new surface disturbance outside these corridors is anticipated. No additional inventory is required under the provisions of 8110.23B2 and B3, and no further work is required.

Native American Religious Concerns: There are none known or anticipated for this project. Consultation with the appropriate tribes has been completed and no further work is required.

Threatened and Endangered Species: The proposed action will have no effect to an animal or plant species listed, proposed, or candidate to the Endangered Species Act, BLM sensitive species, or migratory birds.

MITIGATION (from existing plan):

1. To protect wintering big game and crucial habitats, no surface disturbing activities shall occur from December 1 through April 30 on selected seasonal closure routes identified in the travel management plan.
2. To minimize impacts on migratory bird populations, no surface disturbing activities shall occur from May 15 through July 15. This timeframe encompasses the core breeding season for the majority of migratory birds in the project area. Project activities shall retain and avoid modifying identified cavity trees, snags, and perches in the project area.

Conclusion

Based on the review documented above, I conclude that this proposal conforms to the applicable land use plan and that the NEPA documentation fully covers the proposed action and constitutes BLM's compliance with the requirements of the NEPA.

Signature of Project Lead

Handwritten Signature

Date

3/2/15

Signature of NEPA Coordinator

Handwritten Signature

Date

3/2/15

Signature of the Responsible Official

Handwritten Signature: Barbara Sharrow

Barbara Sharrow

Field Manager, Uncompahgre Field Office

Date

3-24-15

Note: The signed Conclusion on this Worksheet is part of an interim step in the BLM's internal decision process and does not constitute an appealable decision. However, the lease, permit, or other authorization based on this DNA is subject to protest or appeal under 43 CFR Part 4 and the program-specific regulations.



